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GRAY-BACKED SHEARWATER ON FARALLON TRIP

For the sea-faring bird finders who left Berkeley Yacht Harbor at dawn on September 10, 1950, several treats were forthcoming. As we passed "Bird Rock" on the Marin County coast thousands of Brandt Cormorants took to the water from the guano-covered island at a signal from our boat operator. A few Murres had been seen in the bay and through the Gate; but they became most numerous from near Bird Rock to some 7 miles offshore, 100 to 150 per half-hour of travel being seen in this region, and similar numbers near the Farallones.

Frozen fish was doled out as our boat headed southwest toward the light-ship, thus keeping a number of gulls behind us at all times; and these would interest a few other birds in coming in. Heermann Gulls were common, also Westerns, California and a few Glaucous-winged Gulls were seen well offshore. At 6 miles out from Muir Beach the first really pelagic birds began to show up, Sooty Shearwaters being the most numerous (45-50 in an hour's travel at 8 1/2 to 10 miles offshore). Here we also had good views of several Pink-footed Shearwaters, their slow wing beats contrasting with the more rapid ones of the smaller Sooty. We were fortunate in seeing one Black-footed Albatross at about 11 miles out; and a mile farther a Gray-backed Shearwater (*Puffinus bulleri*), one of the rarer species here, was sighted.

While circling the islands early in the afternoon we saw many Brown Pelicans, Brandt and Pelagic Cormorants, Western and Heermann Gulls, and an estimated 150 Murres, 250 Cassin Auklets (in flocks), 6 Pigeon Guillemots, and 1 Tufted Puffin. Other birds seen enroute, included: Fulmar, 1; Black Turnstone, 6; Phalaropes (including many certain Northern and at least one Red), 250 est.; Pomarine Jaeger, 1; Jaeger, unidentified, 2; Common (or possibly Arctic) Tern, 5+; Forster Tern, 40 (mostly near shore); and Goldfinch sp.?, 2 at 11 miles offshore and going farther! A total of 9 Pink-footed Shearwaters and 85 Sooty Shearwaters were disclosed by my tally sheet kept by half-hour intervals throughout the oceanic portion of the trip.

A second Gray-backed Shearwater (or possibly the same one again) was seen at much closer range in the afternoon, about 16 miles offshore. This species, sometimes referred to as the "New Zealand" Shearwater, nests, according to Murphy (Oceanic Birds of So. America; p. 665) "on islets off North Island, New Zealand" and ranges "eastward to the west coast of South America and northward to California." Judging from the condition of birds collected,

Murphy also says "a still undiscovered American breeding ground is at least possible." Sixteen specimens have been taken from the ocean off Monterey, all in the September to early November period, prior to 1911; but there are more recent sight records, including 2 which I saw from the shore at Point Pinos, Monterey Co., in July, 1949. Grinnell and Miller's state list (Pacific Coast Avifauna No. 27, 1944) states that this species is a "rare but possibly regular fall visitant." The occurrence of individuals along our coast in October and November, and in the central Pacific, where I saw numbers of them in November, 1945, would lend a bit of weight to the possibility of other breeding grounds than New Zealand, where nesting begins in September or October (Murphy, p. 668).

Although our new northernmost record, i.e. off the Golden Gate, is only a sight observation, the bird we saw in the afternoon made several complete circuits of the boat and afforded everyone thereon fine views of its plumage from all angles. If a good view of the upperparts is obtained, this species is easily recognized by the contrast of the mouse gray of the back, outer secondaries, and upper tail coverts with the blackish brown of the top of the head and of a broad, inverted "W" which includes the primaries and their coverts, the lesser, middle, and inner secondary coverts, the innermost secondaries, and the rump feathers. This conspicuous pattern, together with pure white underparts is like no other shearwater, although the Kittiwake, when in immature plumage, has a similar pattern of dark on a lighter gray—but it, of course, is a gull, without the characteristic shearwater flight.

—HOWARD L. COGSWELL

COWBIRDS IN THE BAY AREA

The 1950 nesting season seems to have brought an unusually large number of Cowbirds to the San Francisco Bay area. In recent years, at least, Cowbirds have been relatively scarce, with an adult or two seen, but this year they have been present in many places where they had not been found before. Beginning in late April and continuing into August there have been observations of four to eight Cowbirds in Tilden Park, Berkeley, Oakland, Piedmont, Los Gatos and Napa County. Song Sparrows were seen feeding young Cowbirds in three widely separated areas near Lake Merritt, and one in Golden Gate Park. Two young Cowbirds were fed in a Piedmont garden by a pair of Song Sparrows assisted occasionally by a White-crowned Sparrow until they were lured away by an adult male Cowbird after they had begun to feed themselves. It is significant that invariably observers have reported that this species had not been seen in previous years or that numbers this year were greater. "The Distribution of the Birds of California" recorded a "phenomenal" increase in the San Francisco Bay region beginning about 1922 so it may be that this year marks the start of another increase for the area. Comments and reports of observations will be appreciated.

RUSSELL H. PRAY, 662 Santa Rosa Avenue, Berkeley 7, California.

Mr. Emerson A. Stoner of Benicia, Calif. reported banding a juvenile cowbird July 15th, 1949. "Cowbirds breed in the territory about Benicia, but the birds are seldom seen. The heavily-streaked underparts of the juveniles are much different from their parasitic parents."

AUGUST—U.C. CAMPUS—STRAWBERRY CANYON—TRIP

On Saturday, August 26, twenty members and guests met at the west entrance of the U. C. Campus. The party split into two groups. One of thirteen led by Arthur Myer explored the campus and later the Botanical Garden. The other group covered some of the fire trails in Strawberry Canyon and after some bush-whacking arrived at the Garden. It was a typical late summer day, cool and foggy changing to warm and sunny. The birding was good for late August. A chestnut-backed chickadee was seen near Panoramic Way. Both groups had exceptional views of pine siskins, which were feeding enthusiastically on the seeds of acacia trees. The following 37 species of birds were seen:

Cooper and red-tl. hawk, Calif. quail, mourning dove, Anna and Allen hummingbird, red-sh. flicker, hairy and downy woodpecker, blk. phoebe, west. flycatcher, west. wood pewee, Steller and scrub (Calif.) jay, Ch.-bk chickadee pl. titmouse, bush-tit, red-br. nuthatch, wren-tit, robin, russet-bk. thrush, Hutton and solitary vireo, or.-cr. and pileo warbler, house sparrow, Brewer blackbird, purple and house finch, pine siskin, Amer. and lesser (green-bk.) goldfinch, sp. and br. towhee, Ore. Junco, wh.-cr. and song sparrow.

— A. LAURENCE CURL,
Historian and co-leader.

HIGH LIGHTS OF SEPTEMBER MEETING. Over 100 members and guests enjoyed the Pot-luck Supper in the lovely garden and home of Dr. and Mrs. Reynolds, with accordion accompaniment under a starlit sky.

Mr. Dave Stearns graciously sang several solos and helped with the Community singing.

Dr. Reynolds spoke of the project for preserving a small game refuge on San Francisco Bay; Mrs. Reynolds reported on the Condor situation in regard to drilling for oil near the breeding grounds, restricting that to a quarter of a mile proximity; Mrs. Junea Kelly spoke of the Ross Goose, whose numbers are decreasing; Mr. Vaughan MacCaughey, Mr. Wayne Short, Director of Audubon Screen Tours, Mr. Bert Harwell and Mr. Wilbur Twining, our representative at Audubon Camp all contributed interesting facts and thots.

Mrs. Reynolds showed her delightful picture "Piedmont Gardens".

Appreciation is due to Dr. and Mrs. Reynolds and Mrs. Arthur Myer, social chairman, for the success of the evening. The proceeds will be placed in the Audubon Society's Special Fund.

— MYRA BROWNE, *Recording Secretary.*

OBSERVATIONS

Edited by JUNE W. KELLY

The following observations have been reported:

1 Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Sept. 6; 2 Yellow Warblers, 1 Townsend Warbler, Sept. 21, in Garden, Berkeley; Clelia Paroni.
Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Sept. 3; Golden-Crowned Sparrow, Sept. 24, Oakland, Estella Bruce.

For the past two weeks several Swainson Thrushes have been in the garden daily, Sept. 11-25; Gambel Sparrow, Sept. 22; Golden-Crowned Sparrow Sept. 23, Alameda, Junea W. Kelly.

AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS. The first of these color motion pictures, **BENEATH BUCKEYE SKIES**, by Karl Maslowski, will be shown October 6, at Berkeley High School Little Theatre. No tickets will be sold at the door, so secure your series now from Mr. Harold G. Peterson, 3548 - 65th Ave., Oakland 5. \$3.00 for the five lecture films.

OCTOBER MEETING

The 397th meeting of the Golden Gate Audubon Society will be held Oct. 12th at the Oakland Public Museum, Lake Merritt, Oak and 14th St. at 7:30 p. m.

Mr. Allyn G. Smith of Berkeley will talk on "THE REDISCOVERY OF THE FARALLON ISLANDS". Mr. Smith is an associate of the California Academy of Sciences. He spent some time on the islands in 1949. He will show slides and other photographs recently acquired by the Academy.

Guests are welcome. No-host dinner at Zerikotes, Lake Merritt at 6 p. m.

OCTOBER STINSON BEACH TRIP

On Sunday, October 15, to Stinson Beach, Marin Co. On this trip last year 90 species of birds were seen, including the Osprey and Black Brant. Take 8:15 Bolinas bus from Greyhound Depot, Seventh and Mission Streets, San Francisco, and get off at Stinson Beach. Meet at the bus depot there at 9:30. We will hike out along the beach to the end of the sand bar, and later may visit the Olema Marsh. Bring binoculars, telescope, lunch and interested friends.

OCTOBER LAKE MERCED TRIP

On Saturday, October 28, to Fleishacker Playfield and Zoo, Lake Merced, and probably other spots in southwestern San Francisco. Meet at the entrance to the Playfield at 8:30. The "L" car is the best approach. Bring binoculars, telescope, lunch if desired, and interested friends.

— A. LAURENCE CURL, *Chairman*,
Field Trips Committee.

IN MEMORIAM: MRS. GERTRUDE K. DICKMAN, a member since 1942.

Golden Gate Audubon Society

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For the Study and the Protection of Birds

Branch of National Audubon Society

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